

DATE:

MAY 26 1970

To : Myron Tribus

FROM : Joshua Lederberg

SUBJECT: Notes on Half-Truths

- a) Some sources are replete with HT's. (But do not dismiss the part that may be true.) E.G.

Most commentaries on the 'dangers of science' and of economic growth

E.J. Mishan's books: Technology and Growth; Costs of Econ. Growth

Paul and Anne Ehrlich : Population, Resources, Environment

Ted Roszak: The making of a counter-culture

H. Muller: The children of Frankenstein

H. Wheeler; John Lear; etc. in Saturday Review and in

Center Review (Santa Barbara)

- b) I recall an almost apocryphal example (reference? ~~the~~ NY Times Index back 5+3 years.) NYC used to require fingerprinting of cabaret employees etc. There may have been other good reasons to suspend the same; but they did in fact on the argument that "fingerprinting had caught almost no one with a criminal record" <in violation of the city licensing reqs.>.

This is a little like criticizing past generations of strategic weapons as having been useless because they were never used.

- c) Any statement about absolute safety, security etc. is a HT.

"Lead is not a health problem"

Fluorides, NTA, ..... are "safe"

- d) Medical research treats people as objects. ∴ it is dehumanizing  
(Generalize to the whole man-machine interface.) (H. Wheeler)

- e) TV does [not] cause violence.

- f) ... generic equivalence of drugs.

- g) America is a racist society. 97

- h) Intelligence is hereditary. ~~xxxx~~ 143, 145 etc

- i) Academic science is free.

- j) Aedes eradication is a waste of money. (See column encl. #200)

- k) A broadcaster must not be hampered in his use of a TV channel under the doctrine of "free speech" (See #156).

- l) Confusion of responsibility with guilt. See note on 97. This is, need I tell you, one of the central issues of the times. (Responsibility is that opportunity for beneficial change that attaches to power, and ought to be the very opposite of moral abasement.)

I will be glad to ~~accept~~ amplify many of these.  
Lederberg

More an half-truths.

Several works parody "how to lie with statistics". But see "Wallis and Roberts" m--'Statistics-- a new approach', Free Press 1956 for a very fine set of examples, instructively analyzed.

Need I point out the serious problems that agencies like BLS (and your own Dept.) face in maintaining both fairmindedness and historical consistence in maintaining various indices.

The GNP (discussed by Boulding & others) is an excellent case in point.

*genuine equivalent  
Gates in Helfenrich.*

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*Tribune*